

# JOURNEY TO THE WEST

WU CHENG'EN

Translated by  
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## CHAPTER SIXTY-SEVEN

The dhyana-nature is stable and Tuoluo  
Village is saved;  
The mind of the Way is purified as  
corruption is removed.

The story tells how Sanzang and his three disciples happily continued along their way after leaving the Lesser Western Heaven. They had been going for over a month, and it was now late spring. The flowers were in bloom and all the woods they could see were full of green shade. After a spell of wind and rain dusk was falling once more. "Disciple," said Sanzang, reining in his horse, "it's getting late. Which way shall we go to look for somewhere to spend the night?" "Don't worry, Master," said Monkey with a smile. "Even if we can't find anywhere to stay we three all have our skills. Tell Pig to cut some grass and Friar Sand to fell some pines. I know a bit of carpentry. We can make ourselves a hut by the road here good enough to stay in for a year. Why the rush?" "But this is no place to stay, brother," said Pig. "The mountain's crawling with wild beasts like tigers, leopards and wolves. Mountain ogres and hobgoblins are all over the place. It's hard enough travelling by daylight. I wouldn't dare spend the night here." "Idiot!" said Monkey. "You're getting more and more hopeless. I'm not just shooting my mouth off. With this cudgel in my hands I could hold up the sky itself if it collapsed."

Master and disciples were in the middle of their conversation when they noticed a hill farm not far away. "Good," said Monkey, "a place for the night." "Where?" the venerable elder asked. "Isn't that a house in the trees over there?" asked Monkey, pointing. "Let's ask if we can put up for the night there. We can be on our way first thing in the morning."

Sanzang was so delighted he urged his horse forward. Dismounting outside the wicker gates he found them firmly fastened. "Open up, open up," he called, knocking on the gates. They were opened from the inside by an old man with a stick who was wearing rush sandals, a black turban and a plain gown. "Who's that shouting?" he asked. Putting his hands together in front of his chest, Sanzang bowed in polite greeting and said, "Venerable patron, I am a monk sent from the east to fetch scriptures from the Western Heaven. As I have reached this distinguished place so late in the day I have come to your residence to ask for a night's lodging. I beg you to be charitable to us." "Monk," the elder said, "you may want to go to the West, but you'll never get there. This is the Lesser Western Heaven, and it's a very long way from here to the Great Western Heaven. This place alone is hard enough to get out of, to say nothing of the difficulties of the rest of the journey." "Why is it hard to get out of?" Sanzang asked. The old man put his hands together and replied, "About a dozen miles west of our village is a Runny Persimmon Lane and a mountain called Seven Perfections." "Why 'Seven Perfections'?" Sanzang asked.

"It's 250 miles across," the old man replied, "and covered with persimmons. There's an old saying that persimmon trees have seven perfections: 1. They prolong life. 2. They are very shady. 3. No birds nest in them. 4. They are free of insects. 5. Their leaves are very beautiful after frost. 6. The fruit is excellent. 7. The branches and leaves are big and fat. That's why it's called Mount Seven Perfections. This is a big, thinly populated area, and nobody has ever been deep into the mountain. Every year over-ripe, rotten persimmons fall on the path, and they fill the rocky lane right up. The rain, dew, snow and frost attack them, and they rot all through the summer until the whole path is a mass of putrefaction. The people round here call it Runny Shit, or Runny Persimmon, Lane. When there's a west wind it smells even worse than a cesspit being emptied. As it's now high spring and there's a strong southeasterly blowing you can't smell it yet." Sanzang felt too depressed to speak.

Monkey could not contain himself. "Silly old fool," he shouted at the top of his voice. "We're here late at night to find somewhere to stay, and you're trying to scare us with all that talk. If your house really is so poky that there's no room for us to sleep indoors we'll spend the night squatting under this tree. So cut the cackle." At the sight of Monkey's hideous face the old man shut his mouth, petrified with fear. Then he plucked up his courage, pointed his stick at Monkey and shouted, "Damn you, you bony-faced, pointy-browed, flat-nosed, sunken-cheeked, hairy-eyed, sickly-looking devil. You've got no sense of respect, sticking your mouth out like that and insulting an old gentleman." "You're not very perceptive, old chap," Monkey replied, putting on a smile. "You don't realize who this sickly-looking devil is. As the manual of physiognomy says, 'A freakish face is like a rock in which fine jade is hidden.' You're completely wrong to judge people on their looks. Ugly I certainly am, but I know a trick or two." "Where are you from?" the old man asked. "What's your name? What powers do you have?" To this Monkey replied with a smile:

*"My home is in the Eastern Continent of Superior Body;  
My conduct I cultivated on the Mount of Flowers and  
Fruit.*

*After studying with the Patriarch of the Spirit-tower  
Heart Mountain*

*I learned complete and perfect skill in the martial arts.*

*I can stir up the oceans, subdue mother dragons,*

*Carry mountains on my shoulders, and drive the sun  
along.*

*At capturing monsters and demons I'm champion;*

*Ghosts and gods are terrified when I shift the stars.*

*Great is my fame as sky-thief and earth-turner;*

*I'm the Handsome Stone Monkey of infinite transforma-  
tions."*

This turned the old man's anger to delight. Bowing to them he said, "Please come into my humble abode and make yourselves comfortable." The four of them then went in together, leading

the horse and carrying the load. All that could be seen to either side of the gates were prickly thorns. The inner gates were set in a wall of brick and stone that had more thorns on top of it, and only when they had gone through them did they see a *three-roomed tiled house*. The old man pulled up chairs for them to sit on while they waited for tea to be brought and gave orders for a meal. Soon a table was brought in and set with wheat gluten, beancurd, sweet potatoes, radishes, mustard greens, turnips, rice and sour-mallow soup. Master and disciples all ate their fill. After the meal Pig pulled Monkey aside and whispered, "Brother, the old bloke wasn't going to let us stay at first. Now he's given us this slap-up meal. Why?" "It wasn't worth very much, was it?" Brother Monkey replied. "Tomorrow we'll make him give us ten kinds of fruit and ten dishes of food." "You've got a nerve," Pig replied. "You talked him into giving us a meal all right with all that boasting. But we'll be on our way tomorrow. How can he give you things?" "Don't be so impatient," said Monkey, "I've got a way to cope."

Dusk soon started to draw in. The old man brought a lamp, and Monkey asked with a bow, "What is your surname, sir?" "Li," the old man replied. "I suppose this must be Li Village," Monkey continued. "No," said the old man, "this is Tuoluo Village. Over five hundred families live here. Most of them have other surnames. I am the only one called Li." "Benefactor Li," Monkey replied, "with what kind intentions did you give us that ample meal?" "Just now you said that you could capture evil monsters," said the old man. "We have a monster here that we'd like you to capture for us, and we will of course reward you generously." Monkey then chanted a "na-a-aw" of respect and said, "I accept your commission." "Just look at him," said Pig, "asking for trouble. The moment he hears there's a demon to catch he's nicer to him than he would be to his own grandfather. He even chanted a 'na-a-aw' first." "You don't understand, brother," said Monkey. "My 'na-a-aw' clinched the deal. Now he won't hire anyone else."

When Sanzang heard this he said, "You monkey, you always

want to grab things for yourself. If that evil spirit's powers are too great for you to capture him then we monks will be shown up as liars." "Don't be cross with me, Master," Monkey said with a smile. "Let me ask some more questions." "What else?" the old man asked. "This fine village is on an open plain and a lot of people live here," said Monkey. "It's not remote and isolated. What evil spirit would dare come to your door?"

"I will be frank with you," the old man replied. "We had long lived in peace and prosperity here till a sudden, strong wind blew three and a half years ago. Everyone was busy at the time threshing the wheat on the threshing floor or transplanting rice in the paddy fields. We thought it was just a change in the weather. We never imagined that when the wind had blown by an evil spirit would eat the horses and cattle that people had put out to pasture as well as the pigs and the sheep. He swallowed hens and geese whole, and any men or women he found he devoured alive. Since then he's come again each of the last two years to murder us. Venerable sir, if you really do have magic powers to capture the evil spirit and cleanse the place of him, we will most certainly reward you generously and with great respect." "But the monster will be hard to catch," Monkey replied. "Yes," said Pig, "very hard. We're pilgrim monks only here for the night. We'll be on our way tomorrow. We can't catch any monsters." "So you monks just tricked that meal out of me," the old man said. "When we first met you talked very big. You said you could move the stars and capture evil monsters. But now I've told you about this you pretend he can't be caught."

"Old man," said Monkey, "it would be easy to catch the evil spirit, except that you people here don't work together. That's why it's hard." "How can you be so sure that we don't work together?" the old man asked. "If the monster has been harassing you for three years, goodness only knows how many lives he's taken," Monkey replied. "I reckon that if every family put up one ounce of silver the five hundred households could raise five hundred ounces, and with that you could find a priest somewhere who'd exorcise the monster. Why did you cheerfully put up

with three years of such cruelty from him?" "You talk of spending money," the old man said. "You're trying to shame us to death. Every family here has spent four or five ounces of silver. The year before last we went to invite a Buddhist monk south of the mountains here to catch the monster, but he failed." "How did the monk try to do it?" Brother Monkey asked. To this the old man replied:

*"The monk wore a cassock  
And recited the scriptures;  
First the Peacock Sutra  
And then the Lotus.  
He burned incense in a burner,  
Held a bell between his hands.  
His reading of the scriptures  
Alarmed the evil spirit,  
Who came straight to the farm  
Amid his wind and clouds.  
The monk fought with the spirit  
And it was a splendid sight:  
One of them landed a punch,  
The other grabbed at his foe.  
The monk had the advantage of  
Having a hairless head.  
But soon the demon had won,  
And gone straight back to his clouds.  
When the wound had dried in the sun  
We went up close for a look;  
The monk's bald head was smashed open  
Just like a ripe watermelon."*

"In other words," laughed Monkey, "he lost." "He just paid with his life," the old man replied. "We were the ones who lost. We had to buy his coffin, pay for his funeral, and give compensation to his disciple. That silver wasn't enough for the disciple. He's still trying to sue us. He won't call it a day."

"Did you hire anyone else to catch the demon?" Monkey asked, "Last year we invited a Taoist priest to do it," the old

man replied. "How did he try?" Monkey asked. "The Taoist," the old man replied,

*"Wore a golden crown on his head,  
And magic robes on his body,  
He sounded his magic wand,  
Used charms and water too.  
He made gods and generals do his will,  
Captured demons and goblins.  
A wild wind howled and roared,  
While black fog blotted all out.  
Demon and Taoist  
Were evenly matched;  
They fought till nightfall,  
When the fiend went back to the clouds.  
Heaven and earth were clear  
And all of us people were there.  
We went out to search for the priest,  
Found him drowned in the mountain stream.  
When we fished him out to look  
He was like a drenched chicken."*

"In other words," said Monkey with a smile, "he lost too." "He only paid with his life, but we had to spend a lot of money that wasn't really necessary," the old man replied. "It doesn't matter," Monkey said, "it doesn't matter. Wait till I catch the demon for you." "If you've got the power to catch him I'll ask some of the village elders to write an undertaking to give you as much silver as you want when you've defeated him. You'll not be a penny short. But if you lose don't try to extort money out of us. We must each accept the will of heaven." "Old man," said Monkey, "they've got you terrified of extortion. We're not like that. Send for the elders."

The old man was delighted. He sent his slaves to invite seven or eight old men from among his next-door neighbours, his cousins, his wife's family and his friends. They all came to meet the strangers, and when they had greeted the Tang Priest they cheerfully discussed the capture of the demon. "Which of

your distinguished disciples will do it?" they asked. "I will," said Monkey, putting his hands together in front of his chest. "You'll never do, never," said the old man with horror. "The evil spirit's magic powers are enormous, and it's huge too. Venerable sir, you're so tiny and skinny you'd slip through one of the gaps between its teeth." "Old man," said Monkey with a smile, "you're no judge of people. Small I may be, but I'm solid. There's a lot more to me than meets the eye." When the elders heard this they had to take him at his word. "Venerable sir," they said, "how big a reward will you want for capturing the demon?" "Why do you have to talk about a reward?" Monkey asked. "As the saying goes, 'Gold dazzles, silver is white and stupid, and copper coins stink.' We're virtuous monks and we definitely won't take money."

"In that case you must all be lofty monks who obey your vows," the elders said. "But even if you won't accept money we can't let you work for nothing. We all live by agriculture. If you subdue the demon and clean the place up, every family here will give you a third of an acre of good farmland, which will make over 150 acres altogether. Your master and you disciples can build a monastery there and sit in meditation. That would be much better than going on your long journey." "It would be even worse," replied Brother Monkey with a smile. "If we asked for land we'd have to raise horses, do labour service, pay grain taxes and hand over hay. We'll never be able to go to bed at dusk or lie in after the fifth watch. It'd be the death of us." "If you won't accept anything, how are we to express our thanks?" the elders asked. "We're men of religion," said Monkey. "Some tea and a meal will be thanks enough for us." "That's easy," said the elders. "But how are you going to catch the demon?" "Once it comes I'll get it," said Monkey. "But it's enormous," the elders said. "It stretches from the earth to the sky. It comes in wind and goes in mist. How are you ever going to get close to it?" "When it comes to evil spirits who can summon winds and ride on clouds," Monkey replied, "I treat them as mere kids. It makes no difference how big it is — I have ways of beating it."



As they were talking the howl of a great wind made the eight or nine elders start shaking with fear. "Monk, you've asked for trouble and you've got it," they said. "You talked about the monster and here he is." Old Mr. Li opened the door and said to his relations and the Tang Priest, "Come in, come in, the demon's here." This so alarmed Pig and Friar Sand that they wanted to go inside too, but Monkey grabbed each of them with one of his hands and said, "You're a disgrace. You're monks and you ought to know better. Stay where you are, and don't try to run away. Come into the courtyard with me. We're going to see what kind of evil spirit this is." "But brother," said Pig, "they've been through this before. The noise of the wind means that the demon's coming. They've all gone to hide. We're not friends or relations of the demon. We've had no business dealings with him. What do we want to see him for?" Monkey was so strong that with no further argument he hauled them into the courtyard and made them stand there while the wind blew louder and louder. It was a splendid wind that

*Uprooted trees and flattened woods, alarming wolves and  
tigers,  
Stirred up the rivers and oceans to the horror of ghosts  
and gods,  
Blowing the triple peaks of the great Mount Hua all up-  
side down,  
Shaking the earth and sky through the world's four con-  
tinents.  
Every village family shut fast its gates,  
While boys and girls all fled for cover.  
Black clouds blotted out the Milky Way;  
Lamps lost their brightness and the world went dark.*

Pig was shaking with terror. He lay on the ground, rooted into the earth with his snout and buried his head. He looked as if he had been nailed there. Friar Sand covered his face and could not keep his eyes open.

Monkey knew from the sound of the wind that the demon was in it. A moment later, when the wind had passed, all that